

**RESOLUTION
BRAIN HEALTH
2005 WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING**

Overview

Alzheimer's disease is the nation's looming public health crisis of the 21st Century. By 2030, when baby boomers reach the age of significant risk, the prevalence of Alzheimer's will soar an estimated 70 percent above the 4.5 million people affected today. By 2050 it is estimated that between 11 and 16 million Americans will suffer from Alzheimer's. This epidemic will place an overwhelming demand on government-supported healthcare (Medicare and Medicaid), the public health system and other social services, and will bankrupt many families.

Resolutions

- 1) Increase awareness among the general public of the importance of brain health and healthy lifestyles to promote it.
- 2) Mobilize public health resources toward brain health promotion.
- 3) Expand the knowledge base on brain health promotion and Alzheimer's disease prevention through public health surveillance, evaluation of public health interventions and dissemination of relevant research.
- 4) Increase understanding of interventions that will reach populations affected by health disparities and provide a new foundation for sustainable brain healthy behaviors across society.

Resolution 1: Increase Awareness of Brain Health

Background

Recent research advances in Alzheimer's disease suggest that lifestyle measures aimed at improving the health of one's brain may help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's. Aggressive public awareness efforts to encourage use of these measures are a key tool in our national defense against Alzheimer's disease.

Implementation Recommendations

1. Implement a focused effort on brain health promotion to address the public health impact of Alzheimer's disease and dementia.
2. Change the public's knowledge, attitudes and behaviors about brain health.
3. Promote lifestyle choices aimed at healthy aging and prevention of Alzheimer's disease by reducing risk factors associated with the disease.

Resolution 2: Mobilize Resources Toward Brain Health Promotion

Background

Effective prevention measures exist today to substantially reduce illness, disability, and long-term care needs among older adults, including those who suffer from Alzheimer's, but they are substantially underused.

Implementation Recommendations

- 1) Develop a nation-wide network of model community-based brain health promotion and disease prevention programs, including culturally appropriate programs to reach underserved communities.
- 2) Enhance utilization of evidence-based interventions to promote prevention and reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Resolution 3: Expand the Knowledge Base on Brain Health Promotion

Background

Like other parts of your body, the brain may lose some agility as individuals age. Evidence shows that our brains can deteriorate even more if we do not take care of them. Science is unlocking many of the mysteries of the brain, but we do not have all of the answers yet. A person can do everything “right” and still not prevent Alzheimer's disease. More research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of public health interventions.

Implementation Recommendations

- 1) Establish a baseline of the nationwide burden of Alzheimer's disease and dementia-related mortality and morbidity.
- 2) Publish a comprehensive report to establish the current state of knowledge in brain health and make recommendations for future initiatives.
- 3) Develop a national Brain Health Action Plan that incorporates current scientific knowledge and the commitment of key stakeholders from related fields to elevate national understanding of brain health promotion.

Resolution 4: Improve Understanding of Brain Healthy Behaviors

Background

New evidence on lifestyle and diet now provide a foundation to reach out to the public to change the way the nation thinks about brain health, memory, healthy aging and Alzheimer's disease. A growing body of research suggests that some of the same strategies that preserve overall health may also help prevent or delay Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Recent epidemiological studies have revealed that individuals taking anti-inflammatory drugs to treat conditions such as arthritis appear to have a lower-than-expected occurrence of Alzheimer's disease. Ongoing research appears to link known risk factors for diabetes and heart disease (including high blood pressure and high cholesterol) and risk factors for Alzheimer's disease and dementia. In addition, there is evidence that maintaining intellectual and physical activity and remaining socially connected may also help stave off dementia.

Implementation Recommendations

- 1) Develop a community-based promotional and public health awareness campaign to help ensure a wider acceptance and adoption of brain health promotion intervention strategies.
- 2) Form community-based alliances to develop and spread culturally appropriate brain health messages to ensure adoption among diverse communities.
- 3) Pursue opportunities for brain health promotion among diverse, underserved communities to reduce disparities in brain health.